

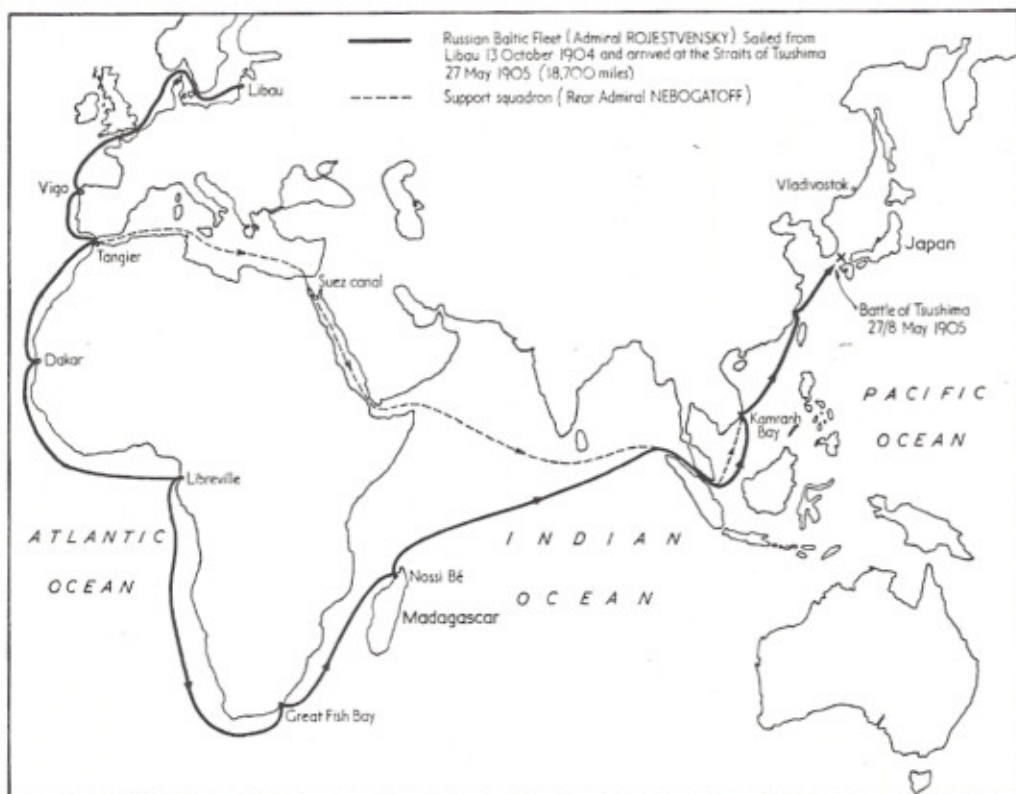
VF- Tsushima

TSUSHIMA

realised the danger; when he arrived with twelve ships of the line off Trincomalee on 2 September, it was already in enemy hands. Next morning Suffren came out of harbour with fourteen of the line and battle was joined twenty-five miles SE of Trincomalee at 2 o'clock that afternoon. A three-hour action ensued in which Suffren was poorly supported by his captains. Upon his flagship, *Héros*, 74, the *Illustre*, 74, and the *Ajax*, 64, fell the brunt of the fighting with the British centre, during which the *Héros* lost her mainmast. As darkness fell both squadrons drew apart and the action ceased. Suffren withdrew into Trincomalee but on the way in, the *L'Orient*, 74, grounded on a reef at the harbour entrance and was wrecked. With no other safe anchorage on the Ceylon coast in the monsoon season, Hughes took his squadron north to Madras and anchored there on 9 September.

TSUSHIMA 27/8 May 1905

Crushing Russian naval defeats by Japan in 1904 induced the Czar to order the Baltic Fleet to the Far East. On 13 October 1904 Admiral Rojdestvensky sailed from Libau with four battleships and a motley collection of old ironclads, cruisers, destroyers and auxiliaries. After a historic 17,000 miles voyage half way round the world, he reached Kamranh Bay, Indo-China



The prelude to TSUSHIMA - the voyage of the Russian Baltic Fleet

Sanderson, Michael¹⁸⁴

Sea Battles: A Reference Guide

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in April 1905. While coaling at Nossi Bé, Madagascar, en route, Rojhestvensky had learned of the fall of Port Arthur but decided to continue. Reinforced by a squadron under Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff, the combined fleet left Kamranh Bay on 14 May, bound for the Straits of Tsushima on its way to Vladivostok. Shortage of fuel prevented the choice of a more circuitous route.

Meanwhile Admiral Togo in command of the Japanese fleet carefully made preparations for the enemy's arrival. Anticipating that the Baltic Fleet would proceed via Tsushima, he had sent scouts to patrol its approaches while he waited with the main fleet in Masampo Bay, a fine anchorage on the south coast of Korea. In the early hours of 27 May the auxiliary cruiser *Shinano Maru* sighted the enemy steering through the mist towards the straits. Alerted by wireless message, Togo immediately put to sea with three battleships and eight armoured cruisers and at 1.45 pm came upon the Russian fleet in close cruising formation, steaming NNE in two columns. Having boldly crossed the enemy's bows to bring his ships on parallel course, Togo engaged. Rapid and accurate Japanese fire soon caused heavy damage and by 3 pm the Russian battleship *Oslabia* had been sunk and the flagship *Suvaroff* disabled and set on fire. Rojhestvensky himself was injured and the command passed to Nebogatoff, with orders to attempt to reach Vladivostok. By that time, however, the Russian fleet was in utter disorder; despite desperate manoeuvres to escape, its fate was sealed. At dusk Togo's heavy ships withdrew having sunk three battleships. During the night Japanese torpedo boats swarmed over the area inflicting further losses. At 10 o'clock next morning Nebogatoff surrendered with the battleships *Nikolai I* and *Orel* and the surviving remnants of the fleet. Among the later prizes was the destroyer *Biedovy* with Rojhestvensky and his staff on board.

The victory achieved at Tsushima by Togo and the Japanese fleet was shattering in its completeness. The Russian Baltic Fleet had been practically annihilated. Of its thirty-eight warships, twenty-nine – including the eight battleships – were either sunk, captured or destroyed. Six others reached Shanghai or Manila, where they were interned; only the cruiser *Almaz* and two destroyers succeeded in reaching Vladivostok. The casualties were in proportion: 117 Japanese killed against 4,830 Russians. Under humiliating terms for Russia, the peace treaty was signed three months after the battle.

USHANT 27 July 1778

The first Anglo-French fleet action of the American War of Independence, fought three months after France had entered the struggle. Admiral Augustus Keppel, in command of the Channel Fleet, sailed from Portsmouth on 9 July, having assembled twenty-six of the line with the greatest difficulty. No such problems beset the French and the day before Comte d'Orvilliers had weighed from Brest with thirty-two of the line. Both fleets sighted each other off Ushant on 23 July and after much manoeuvring came into action four days later some seventy miles west of the island. The battle which followed was inconclusive. During the afternoon the fleets passed each other on opposite tacks and exchanged broadsides. Later Keppel sought to renew action but several of his ships had been disabled. Worst of all, he was quite unsupported by his rear division. Vice-Admiral Hugh Palliser had dropped far astern and ignored urgent signals to rejoin. By the time he had come up it was too late. Although Keppel tried to reform his line, d'Orvilliers retired in the gathering dusk, altered course during the night and regained Brest. The unsatisfactory outcome of the battle gave rise to a bitter and prolonged dispute between Keppel and Palliser, during which both were court-martialled but acquitted.